

Notes from the District 5 Community Meeting  
10-Ten year Strategy to End Homelessness  
City of Long Beach

Date: Wednesday November 16, 2005  
Time: 6:00 – 8:00 PM  
Location: Wardlow Park  
3457 Stanbridge. City of Long Beach, 5th District (Jackie Kell (Vice Mayor), Council Member)

Date Wednesday 16, 2005  
Time 6:00-8:00 PM  
Location Wardlow Park

**Opening Remarks:**

Don went over speaker cards and explained how the two-part discussion would work.

Don opened by explaining the "10 yr strategy". He encouraged any and all input from the audience today or during the weeks to come. All input is compiled and is sent to the Steering Committee via the working group. The steering Committee then forwards the information to City Council.

**Summary of Public Comments:**

Annette: Stated that she feels we need to identify others living in each District that are interested in homelessness. She then asked who is here tonight that lives in this District? I think community involvement is so important. Very few people who live in these specific communities are showing up. That concerns me. I think we need to address affordable housing. I would like to take the Documentary that Jack Smith has made...it goes right in the midst of the homeless and it shows faces of the homeless.

Don: Explained one idea may be to reach the Districts constituents are through cable access.

Annette: Replied one of the complaints of my older customers at my business is that they do not get cable. Things that are on cable access are not accessible to them. Perhaps more local TV stations might be an option.

Claudette: Stated that she is in the process of moving into a home and out of homelessness. I was in a meeting the other night where they were talking about homelessness and I don't remember anything being said about drugs. One guy I met recently had a nice truck. I knew he couldn't afford one as he was homeless, so I asked him how it was he was able to get it now. He said when he quit his drug habit he could afford to buy a truck. I even think drugs are bigger issues than mental health issues.

Ibtisam: stated she has mentioned at other meetings the problems that happen to cause homelessness. There are issues from domestic violence, drugs, mental health etc...I would like to see specific programs to deal more specifically with each of these issues. Have program information accessible in places like Dr.'s offices where the staff may identify one of these specific issues and then they can hand out the info to help them in their specific place of needs. This may help to prevent the homelessness from actually occurring.

Don: Commented that there are no other comments so we will move on to solutions.

### **Summary of Discussion:**

Don explained many plans have focused on homeless prevention because too many times we wait to address the problems until after the client is homeless. Other communities focus on the chronic homeless and transitional homeless. Some plans include Wrap-Around Services - instead of client going all over for services the services coming into their homes. All their services are coordinated in one location. The hope is this will lead to greater success. Many plans have unique Homeless Prevention section. Pasadena has the "Good Neighbor" strategy. They have a plan where people in the neighborhoods stay on watch so to speak for signs of neighbors needing help. Maybe mail laying on ground or lawns not mowed...then they go to help them with whatever the needs are and direct them to the services available.

The goals of these plans are to 1. Reduce the number of Homeless. 2. Increase the amount of permanent housing available. 3. Reduce length of Homeless episodes. 4. Provide any Community based services. I'm not talking about raising billions of dollars but rather redirecting the services that are already here. We need to think creatively about old problems, outside the box. Pasadena uses the Neighborhood Associations. Neighborhoods are linking together with the potential homeless before they become homeless.

Jack Smith: Asked how does ethnicity play in the Neighborhood Plan. What is the ethnic population in Pasadena? I challenge this idea because some neighborhoods here may work with this plan but others will not. They may be aware of the homelessness issues with their neighbors but not be willing to address it with them. Personally I think it goes beyond the neighborhood Associations.

Ibtisam: Explained that she agrees with Jack. From my knowledge there is a large population of Armenian in Pasadena and I think they take on more of a social responsibility with each other. There needs to be more education to teach neighborhoods to help each other. I think we need more cultural sensitivity workshops where we teach people how to "get along" regardless of our color or race... I think that is the beginning.

Sonia: Asked is anyone familiar with the Santa Monica hotline? I don't know much about it but I know they have a hotline for people to call to get more resources.

Sandy: Asked has anyone dared to bring up rent control? Many I know that are on the edge of homelessness due to this outrageous rent!

Jack: Stated Santa Monica has very strict rent control yet I don't think it has fixed their homeless issues.

Kathleen: Stated she thinks it would be good to have pamphlets available everywhere for people. I don't think many know what homelessness looks like. I think we need to teach people what it is. It's not always pushing carts and begging for money. We need to learn more about the one who are more in the background.

Maggie: Explained that this city does not have Just Cause eviction laws. You could have more rent control but if you do not have Just Cause the law is worthless.

Sonia: Explained that she works on a locked psychiatric ward. We have a large population of homelessness among our patients. If the services are not accessible when they leave...easy to get to...when they are dealing with homelessness it will just continue.

Don: Asked so do we need a centralized building to have people go to get the services?

Jack: Stated again I ask who does the follow up? Who pays for it? Great ideas but no implementation plan.

Sandy: replied surely if they can find this assistance for the criminals when they are released they can find it for our mental health people.

Jack: explained he thinks we are waiting for the Government to move but I think we need to adopt families within the communities. We need faith based and community businesses getting involved. It's not about at the Holiday's throwing in a few bucks to help the homeless. People are thinking this is enough but it's not enough. It's more than that!

Maggie: stated that many people also need to be educated on mental health issues. Especially the families that have people struggling with mental health problems. If the families were educated I think that there would be less homeless.

Sonia: explained that she knows that Orange County has Case Managers who do help families who have mental health clients, but there are not enough workers. The case loads are too large for them to get to everyone.

Jack: repeated again I ask where does this money come from? I think the citizens need to step up. Quit looking for Government to cure this problem. The Council meeting I go to weekly has a policy where they bring in a dog or cat that needs a home. Why can we not present every week a homeless person/family to adopt?

Kathleen: stated I think the sponsorship idea is good but what about the people living in hotels? They aren't considered homeless but they are. Do we continue to sponsor them as long as they are living in hotels? They need to be educated to move beyond the hotel. There has to be training to help them too. What about people who have messed up credit? Can they get apartments?

Jack: stated this is where owners have to be convinced to take a risk with these people.

Sonia: stated if we are focusing on prevention, we have to find out why they are homeless. You really can't help them prevent if you don't know what the problems are. I'm an advocate for communication. Many do not know how to communicate to their families.

Jack: Asked so what does that look like?

Kathleen: Explained that maybe they need to look at expanding the eviction notices from 60 days to 90 days, if they have lived there for more than a year. I think that will give them more time.

Jack: Stated he knows a guy who told him that 90% of evictions are due to not paying rent. Whether its 60 days or 90 days the extra time really won't help them come up with more money to pay rent.

Maggie: Added so they need financial education so they know how to budget money to make the rent.

Kathleen: stated when there is an eviction notice maybe it should be a requirement to have attached info to advise the evicted clients on what options are out there for them.

Susan: Added that Eviction Prevention Funds are hard to come by. It's hard for people to make their first and last month rent. But right now we have no Eviction Prevention Funds available. It really is a small amount of money. Last year we were able to help 22 families but now it's gone. It's going towards shelters not prevention.

Annette: Added in conjunction with all of this the Government takes too long to address things. They take 6 months or so and by then it's too late. We really need faith and community institutes to join in together to help this cause.

Sonia: Asked are there a lot of families who experience evictions over and over?

Susan: Explained that anyone with 2 or more evictions is very hard to house. But yes we do have people with 4 or 5 evictions.

Sonia: Asked so we do need to educate clients on how to avoid evictions?

Ibtisam: Stated most programs will work with incentives. Landlords need incentives for housing these evicted clients.

Jack: Added like we heard from the gentlemen from Catholic Charities we have to make it look "profitable".

Maggie: Stated another issue they run into is the fee for the credit check when they apply for an apartment. Sometimes it takes several times and then there goes a lot of money. It takes awhile sometimes before you find the right spot.

Don: Added that many communities are using SRO's and safe havens.

Jack: Stated they are getting away from calling them SRO's.

Don: Explained Safe Havens are places with very little rules or regulations. While they are there they learn how to become self-sufficient.

Sonia: Stated the chronically ill clients really need some kind of housing where people can live and have someone come in daily to remind them to take meds so they don't get messed up and become homeless again. Assisted living for the mentally ill.

Claudette: Added that most of those places though take a majority of the client's money. The clients will get \$900 and the Assisted Living will take \$840. On top of it they do not prepare healthy meals that will be sufficient for someone who is a diabetic.

Maggie: Stated the Villages have a model program. They give each person their own housing for as long as they need it. Case Management is provided but the client is not told what to do. They are only informed of options. People have to be educated as to why it is important to make the right decisions like taking their medication and saving money for rent, food etc.

Don: Explained that is the approach they use in downtown LA. But what about those with substance abuse issues?

Ibtisam: Commented that they have to go to treatment.

Maggie: Stated these Outpatient Programs do not really help people. They are not addressing the real needs. Many people need Residential Programs.

Ibtisam: Added long-term success in these programs is low. Short-term success is better than nothing.

Kathleen: Asked don't drug abusers deserve housing too?

Sonia: Stated she is frustrated with why people are taking drugs. How are we going to reach people before they take drugs?

Sandra: Commented she wants to encourage the Housing First model. It does affect your taxes.

Susan: Explained 60% of the homeless are using drugs. It is not the cause of homelessness just like mental health issues are not the cause of homelessness but those things do prolong homelessness. We have to put people in housing whatever their condition. Others have found housing is a type of cure. Once you put a roof over their heads they decide they want to keep that roof. Of course the wrap-around services help this to happen. Long Beach is the first in history to use the scattered site Safe Haven. Putting people back in the neighborhood. You have to consider the differences between housed and un-housed. It's not that the drug addict or mental health clients have more afflictions than the others...it's really about housed and un-housed.

Annette: Stated she supports the efficiency route not SRO's. You really need your own bathroom and kitchen to be called permanent housing.

Don: Asked do you think we can get the community to support the building of more efficiency units? Can we get Council members to listen?

Kathleen: Asked are there Section 8 vouchers set aside for homeless?

Susan: Explained that we have about 14,000-17,000 families on the list to get the vouchers. Given the way the Government is working it doesn't look like it will happen soon. With prices going up they have had to go to helping higher income families as well.

Jack: Stated the goal is not to set up for them to live free but affordable.

Don: Asked what about the Transitional Homeless, those who have something unexpected come up that makes them become homeless?

Ibtisam: Commented that it really depends on the situation.

Don: Clarified that these are people who have lost jobs etc.

Susan: Explained 60% of Long Beach residents are renters. That means more than half of Long Beach is at the mercy of rent. People who live in the same building for years and suddenly the building is sold. The rent is raised but the elderly don't get raises in their fixed income to meet the rent therefore they are forced to move out.

Ibtisam: Commented maybe we can look into providing funds to help people to relocate. Assuming these people can work. Maybe they need to look at relocating somewhere outside of Long Beach. Maybe we could provide money for them to relocate in another city that may have the jobs for them to help them pay their bills and rent.

Annette: Explained that we are a tourist city. These jobs are all low paying jobs. I think the city owes it to these people who help the tourists in Long Beach to be able to make a living for themselves. We really can't ask them to leave. We need to find a way to increase the wages.

Sonia: Commented we need to help them access the available jobs that pay better.

Jack: Stated he thinks that is a prevention issue. It's really hard for people to make contact with employers. It is difficult for possible employers to make contact with employees.

Don: Added that it seems we need a centralized location for clients to be able to have access for computer, email, mail, showers etc.

Susan: Explained we did have a Long Beach Connections where we housed 22 people. We gave away raffles, haircuts, food, and all kinds of stuff. It does a lot for people when they get haircuts, then they feel better about themselves. It does a lot for their self-esteem and their whole attitude towards life.

Don: Commented then maybe more of these types of carnivals are needed. Something more frequent once a month or every 6 weeks, something with a definite schedule.

Maggie: Stated she thinks we need to add more training for jobs. There needs to be more job training.

Kathleen: Asked what about follow up once they are on the job? How are people doing once they get the job? You can always tell on the job who has some kind of training and who doesn't. Simple things like saying "hi". People need to have social skills to keep their jobs.

Don: Stated lets talk about community education. What can we do to help with this?

Kathleen: Commented that she works for the neighborhood Resource Center. We have many homeless people wondering in and around our facility. They are literally right outside our door taking a dump. You feel for them but we feel so limited about what we can do. We need more information on where we can direct them for assistance, pamphlets to give out with reliable information.

Don: Asked is Multi Service Center the starting point?

Susan: Commented that it is not for prevention. We are funded by HUD, we don't focus on prevention.

Kathleen: Stated that she feels there needs to be more than one location. Use satellites in all the neighborhoods. We at NRC are very limited; we are not really focused on homelessness. We have many other requirements our grants expect us to meet.

Sandy: Commented that many people are wandering into our church. We need to have more pamphlets with numbers to someone who is trained to guide these people.

Don: Stated maybe we need to replicate NRC and their commitments to their projects?

Sandy: Stated we need a Community Campaign to expel the mythology of homelessness. Educate the community.

Kathleen: Added that she very strongly wants to express the need for satellite offices. You have to have more than one office for those who cannot leave their specific neighborhoods.

Meeting Adjourned 8:00 pm.